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M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: May 20, 2011

TO: Equine Stakeholders in Michigan

FROM: Steven L. Halstead, DVM, MS, State Veterinarian
Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

SUBJECT: EQUINE HERPES VIRUS (EHV-1)

A regional disease investigation into Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) received heightened interest this past week when horses attended a national cutting horse competition in Utah and were exposed to the virus. To date there are no horses in Michigan impacted by this investigation.

While a great deal of effort is going into this incident, several state veterinarians noted that some media reports on the topic seem to indicate this is a national issue. Although horse and livestock owners need to be vigilant and assess the risks of horse movement at this time, this EHV-1 situation is considered regional and is not yet considered an "outbreak." This EHV-1 occurrence appears to be isolated – at least so far – to the horses exposed at the Utah event. Thus, Michigan does not require any additional testing or restrictions for importation (the owners of horses under investigation in other states have been contacted and are quarantined). As always, imported livestock must have a health certificate signed by a licensed veterinarian, be free from clinical signs of disease, and not exposed to any infectious disease. This event appears to be isolated – at least so far – to the horses exposed at the Utah event.

Please note: Michigan equine owners transporting horses to other states should check the destination state's import requirements either on the web or by phone so as not to run into any difficulties.

This instance of EHV-1 is being aggressively investigated – this occurrence received a lot of attention because it impacted horses that travel across the U.S. to compete, and until the investigation is complete, some sponsored events may be canceled or postponed, or may have heighten health and testing requirements.

Equine herpes viruses are common, and Michigan has experienced outbreaks, as well as single cases, in the in past. If horse owners suspect exposure to EHV, they should immediately contact their private practice veterinarian as there are several diseases that have similar clinical signs.

For future reference, exposed horses should be isolated and have their temperatures monitored twice daily for 10 days. If an exposed horse develops a fever or other signs consistent with EHV infection, a veterinarian should be consulted for diagnostic testing. Any cases of EHV require a 21-day quarantine – an aggressive biosecurity measure.

As a reminder: MDARD's veterinarians in the Animal Industry Division investigate and, if necessary, quarantine and/or release farms due to animal health investigations on a daily basis – it is their job.

MDARD recommends the following resources to help measure your biosecurity risk and give you ideas on strengthening your on-farm biosecurity practices:

- Michigan State University Extension's "Be Aware, Be Prepared" Group, Contact Dean Ross at (517) 546-3950. Farm gate bio-security information and visitor policy examples are available at www.cvm.msu.edu/biosecurity.
- Equine owner information:
http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Infection_Control/equine-facilities-for-veterinarians.php

S. L. H.